

New Practices of Giving: Ethics, Governmentality, and the Development of Consumer- Oriented Charity Fundraising

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as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Geography
In September 2010

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Abstract

This thesis emerges in the context of recent developments in the field of charity fundraising. In particular, in order to increase, or simply maintain, fundraising levels charities have had to develop innovative devices which both take charity giving into the spaces in which individuals carry out their daily activities, and provide mechanisms through which they are able to give to charity in their daily lives. This thesis focuses on one such attempt. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate both the practices of constructing alternative giving and the materials which result from this, and the practices of giving and receiving an alternative gift. Alternative giving refers to a fundraising device which is built around a range of gift cards or certificates produced by the charity, each of which represent one particular item or service provided by the charity to its beneficiaries. The cards or certificates are then sold at a price which is designed to mirror the actual cost of providing the item or service represented and are intended to be used by the purchaser as a gift for a friend or relative. As such, alternative giving, as a form of fundraising used by international development charities, raises a number of questions, particularly in terms of how it affects the relationships between individuals and charities, and individuals and the specific beneficiary. Therefore, this thesis draws on literatures around ethics, governmentality, consumption and gift theory to examine the implications of alternative giving for these relationships. Having drawn these literatures into conversations with empirical research based around interviews with charities and those engaging in alternative giving, and a range of textual materials surrounding this, the thesis argues that practices of alternative giving are carried out by ethical subjects who are situated within broad sets of social relations, and which matter to how connections in the charitable act are manifest.

Acknowledgments

My thanks goes, firstly, to all who participated in this research, whether working for a charity, a giver or recipient of an alternative gift, or those who have simply been willing to discuss the idea of it. I really appreciate the time you took out of your busy lives to talk to me about these things.

Next, I would like to thank all those in the geography department at Exeter. My PhD experience has been greatly enhanced by being part of both the academic and social community there. In particular, I would like to thank Agatha, Anne-Flore, Kim and Liz who have kept me in the loop, despite my varying locations, and have provided me with food, entertainment and futon space, so as I could be more present.

Further, my supervisors, Paul Cloke and Nicola Thomas, deserve my extreme thanks for the academic guidance – both conceptual and practical – and moral support they have given me, in addition to their seemingly infinite patience! I must also especially thank Paul for encouraging me to apply for the PhD studentship in the first place, without which I would not have been able to carry out this research.

I must also thank my external thesis examiner, Marcus Power, and my internal thesis examiner, Nick Gill, for a thought-provoking (and enjoyable!) viva examination. I really appreciate the thorough engagement that you made with my thesis and questions and comments that emerged from this.

I would like to thank my friends, Sue, Mark, Tereza, Ness, Issie, Jane, Kat, Aisling; Katie, Rich, Zoe and Stephen from Keele; and all from OBWCC, OneSound (O&S!) and Children's Holiday. These last few years would have been far less enjoyable without the fun times I spent with you, whether in a café or pub, on a cricket pitch or badminton court, playing music, or at Carrot Wood.

Finally, I must thank my fantastic family, particularly my Mum and Dad, Ian and Ina, Dave and Ailith, and Grandparents for their support, care, love, sense of humour and great food! I really appreciate all the things you've done in the last 4 years – and for several decades before that – and the interest that you always show in what I'm doing. And Paul S. I don't know how to thank you enough for everything you've done (don't worry, I'm not talking about you making me move across the country twice!). I really would not have been able to start or finish this without your patience, love and friendship.

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